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PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA



Perseus
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The Story
Retold

by

Richard
Le Gallienne



New York
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PREFATORY NOTE

 THE present version of the story of "Perseus and Andromeda" is largely a free translation of the version to be found in Ovid's "Metamorphoses," adapted at the writer's discretion and amplified according to and by his own fancy. Lucian and Hesiod have been laid under contribution for small inlays, the first very slightly, in the opening paragraph, and the second in the name-list of the nymphs. For the song sung by one of the nymphs to Perseus, as for much else in the version, the writer can claim no more august authority than his own.

R. Le G.





ILLUSTRATIONS

PERSEUS	-	-	Benvenuto Cellini
MEDUSA	-	-	Sir Edward Burne-Jones
PERSEUS	-	-	Benvenuto Cellini
MEDUSA	-	-	Sir Edward Burne-Jones
PERSEUS	-	-	Vatican Museum, Rome
MINERVA	-	-	Vatican Museum, Rome



PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

THE worship of Dionysus, widely accepted as it is to-day, in its beginning, like any other new religion, met with much opposition and counted many martyrs. Yet, in spite of all, it made its way, and a time at length came when only one king held out against it. This was Acrisius, king of Argos. India already recognized Dionysus as a god, and in Achaia temples in his honour were rising every day. But Acrisius stoutly set himself against the new gospel. He denied the divine origin of the god. Most men had come

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

to believe that Dionysus was the veritable son of Zeus. Acrisius remained unconvinced.

Now, of all his children, Zeus had for Dionysus a peculiar affection. When his son's effeminacy, his drunkenness and his various habits of pleasure, were scornfully mentioned in his presence, the divine father would sternly rebuke the critics, and instance the many manly exploits of his well-beloved son. Had he not conquered Lydia, and taken captive the inhabitants of Tmolus, and brought the Thracians under his yoke? India, with its elephants and emperor, was his. And these conquests he had made lightly, without effort, singing and dancing—in his cups, you might almost say.

Acrisius, therefore, was more brave than wise, when he set himself to resist the new worship. Nor was his retribution long deferred. King Acrisius

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

had a daughter, Danæ by name. Now it had been foretold him that she would have a son by whose hand he would die. To circumvent the doom, Acrisius had builded a great tower of brass, in which he kept his daughter a close prisoner. Ever watchful guards encompassed the tower. Day and night their stern eyes never left its gates and doors. It was impossible for a living man, however much he had loved her, to approach Danæ in her brazen tower. She spoke with none save her maidens. Her only visitor was the sunlight, which would sometimes pour in through the high top of her tower, as if to comfort her. She grew to watch for it as though it were indeed a friend, even a lover. She loved to have it pour over her, as she stood up naked in the early morning light. Sometimes she thrilled all through as it fell about her, and once, indeed, it had seemed that in the

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

very centre of the golden stream there had stood a being of terrible brightness. Her heart had failed her as she looked on him—and a strange sleep had come over her. When she had awakened, it was to find herself filled with a sense of unwonted companionship. Though there was no one near her, it seemed to her that she was no longer alone. And, day by day, this sense of an unseen intercourse grew upon her, till at length in a great wonderment, she learned that she was with child of immortal seed; that, indeed, no less a one than the Father of the Gods, himself had thus hallowed her mortal womb.

Thus, in the fullness of time, a boy was born to her, exceeding strong and comely, and she named him Perseus; and in this manner had Zeus frustrated the precautions of King Acrisius, and set in motion his far-seeing revenge

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

against the contemner of the sacred mysteries of his well-beloved son.

But, even still, the eyes of Acrisius remained darkened, and he still further set himself vainly to defy the high gods and circumvent his unescapable doom. As he had denied the divine origin of Dionysus, he now denied the divine paternity of Perseus; and, in his anger, had mother and babe shut in a great chest and thrown into the sea. But once more the watchful Father frustrated the impious king; for the chest was safely washed ashore upon the Island of Seriphos, where a fisherman named Dictys, found it, and took Danaë and her young child before his brother Polydectes, king of the island. Polydectes thereon took the pair under his protection and housed Danaë, as beseemed a princess, in his court. And in such wise, many years went by, and Perseus grew up to manhood. But, indeed,

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

his youth showed more like that of a god than of mortal man, so tall was he of stature, of so haughty a beauty, and so strong and swift was he in all his ways. At all games and war-like exploits, he easily surpassed the youth of the island, though they excelled in such manly sports. No one could look at him without remembering the strange story of his birth, nor doubt that other than mortal blood ran in his veins.

Now there came a time when King Polydectes grew enamoured of Danæ, and desired to make her his wife; but this neither did Danæ nor her son desire. Polydectes, therefore, plotted to remove Perseus, that he might have his will with his mother. To this end, he ordered a great feast, and gave it out that every guest should bring with him a costly present for the king. This condition he made, remembering that Perseus was poor. So it befell that

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

Perseus appeared at the banquet without a gift, and thereon the king and some of his favourites mocked him. Then said the king:— “Perseus, as you have no other gift to bring, bring me the head of the Gorgon Medusa, and I will grant you my pardon.”

This the king said, well knowing the proud courage of Perseus, and deeming that from such an adventure the greatest hero might not return alive.

“In very truth,” answered Perseus, god-like with anger, “I will do your bidding, and here in this very hall, you and your friends shall look upon the dreadful face.”

Thereon the hero set forth, but once more the ever wakeful gods have him in their care, and he had come but a little upon his journey when no less mighty deities than Athene and Hermes met him in the way.

“Perseus,” said Athene, “have no

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

fear. The Deathless Ones watch over you. But hearken well what I tell you. Know that of the three Gorgons,—Stheino, Euryale, and Medusa,—Medusa only is mortal, yet none but the gods may look upon her face, except they be changed to stone. Take, therefore, this shining shield, and, when you would smite her, look not upon her face but on her image in the shield. Hermes will guide you to the abode of the Graiæ, from whom you shall learn the path to the dwelling of the Gorgons.”

Thus said the goddess, inspired, not only by the commands of Zeus, but by an undying hatred which was an old story in the courts of heaven. Still in her divine bosom burned a sleepless anger for her desecrated shrine. Still keen in her heart was that ancient memory of how Poseidon and Medusa long ago had stolen to their profane



PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

loves within her holy temple. Upon her altars had Pegasus been begotten. Insult intolerable to a goddess! Already for this, Medusa dwelt under a fearful doom. Renowned among maidens for her beautiful hair, Athene had changed it into loathsome serpents, and of her beauty she had made a thing so hideous that one grew stone to look upon her. Yet was the anger of the goddess unappeased, and the desire still young within her divine breast to wreak upon her ancient victim yet another woe.

Having thus spoken, the goddess faded from the hero's sight, and he, divinely companioned by Hermes, continued his journey.

After some while, the two came where dwelt Oceanus out in the dark West, and no long way from his dwelling, abode the Graiæ in old caves, grey with unutterable desolation, very mournful and terrifying to the heart. The

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

three daughters of Phorcys and Ceto were hideous beyond telling. They had always been hideous, and they had always been old. From their birth their hair had been white, and their bodies the bodies of ancient crones. They had but one eye and one tooth between them, and these they passed from hand to hand as the occasion required.

Nowise terrified by these grey sisters, Perseus easily found a way to snatch their one eye, as it was passing from the hand of Pephredo into the hand of Enyo. In his own hand he held it as hostage, till they should tell him the way to the abode of their sisters, the Gorgons.

Blind, and toothless, for he had seized their one tooth as well, the hags, foul with antiquity, screamed their impotent rage; yet at length revealed to the hero the dwelling-place of their sisters.

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

Leaving the drear home of the Graiæ, and still companioned by the god, Perseus sped lightly on his way southward to where the green world spins round on the golden axle of the Equator. There are soft winds and skies forever blue, and the warm wine-dark sea, and the cool water-laughing caves; and all day long you may hear the nymphs singing in their houses of coral and pearl.

Hither came the hero, and on a green strip of shore, flickering with sea-daisies, and sheltered by soft grassy hills, he rested awhile, for he was sore weary; and as he fell asleep in the deep grass, with the sound of the sea in his ears, the nymphs stole out of their caves, and rose laughing out of the sea, and came on tip-toe to watch him as he slept, in all his beautiful strength. He slept as though he were a child, and no mighty man of his hands; and sea-girls gazed

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

on him very tenderly, and with no small longing. One whispered of his hair, and another of his eyelids, and a third of his strong throat. And one sang to him this song under her breath, that she might not awaken him:—

O, hero, leave awhile your quest,
And lie upon a sea-girl's breast,
Here by the ever-singing sea,
Forgetting all but you and me—
Ah! stay and listen to the sea.
And the soft winds shall come and play
Their viols for us all the day.
And, with the coming-on of night,
The evening star shall bring her light,
That even though the daylight dies,
I still may look into your eyes.

Is death so sweet, and youth so long?—
O, listen to a sea-girl's song—
That you should go a-seeking death?
O, sweet as flowers is your breath,
Sweet as shut roses your closed eyes,
And nothing sweeter 'neath the skies
Than the soft sound of your sleep.

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

O, love, the sea of death is deep —
Dive not, I would not have you drowned —
There is no happy sight or sound,
But only darkness and old death —
O, sweet as flowers is your breath!

O, hero, leave awhile your quest —
Though death be sweet, yet life is best —
And is it half so sweet to die
As on a sea-girl's breast to lie?
O, hero, leave awhile your quest
And lie upon a sea-girl's breast,
And watch the wonder of the night
And the unfolding of the light,
Forgetting all but you and me —
Ah! stay and listen to the sea!

Softly as the nymph sang, her music stole into the hero's senses, and stirred him in his sleep, so that he opened his eyes — opened them upon a radiant ring of gracious forms that stood about him like flowers that had grown up in his sleep. The moon was just fading from the sky. Her flocks of stars were

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

already in their fold; only the morning star lingered behind, standing on tip-toe for the kiss of the sun. Of all the lovely daughters of Nereus the loveliest had come laughing through the waves to watch the hero as he slept. Glauce was there and Cymothœ, Pasithea and Erato and rosy-armed Eunice; Doris and Panope, with her sea-sad eyes, and lovely Hippothœ. Lysianassa and Ev-arne, faultlessly fair, and Psamathe, graceful as a falling wave. Laomedea and Eupompe and Pontoporia, like Lysianassa, beautiful friends of the sailor-lad; and Amphitrite, who with a stroke of her slim ankles calms the angriest waves, and with one look of her eyes clears the mists from the floor of the sea. Laughing Glauconome and Halimede, with a wreath of spray in her flying hair, and Proto, eldest sister of them all, yet not least lovely. Ah! who would sleep when he might open

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

his eyes upon such forms as these, and upon the morning star and the wide spreading sea?

As Perseus awakened and stood in the long grass wondering, four of the fairest of the sisters came towards him holding gifts in their hands.

Said the first: "Perseus, we would not have you stay till your divine work is done. Here are sandals for your feet. I and my sisters made them for you out of the four winds, as we sat here singing. They are swifter than any bird, and the world will pass like a sigh beneath your feet when you move their little wings. May they take you swiftly to the Medusa, and bring you swiftly back to us and this fair shore."

"Perseus," then said a second, approaching, "this is the helmet of Hades. For your sake, I myself braved all the blackness of the underworld and all its wailing ghosts, and

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

went where Hades sits to beg this boon. By it, you may walk unseen among your fiercest foes, and take no hurt. Only promise, beautiful hero, wear it not with me.”

“Perseus,” said a third, “this is the sword of Hermes. The Father of the Gods called the god away while you slept, and he gave it into our fearful hands. Guard it well, for it was forged by Vulcan himself upon his own magic stithy.”

“And Perseus,” said a fourth, “accept this humble gift from me. It is a wallet. When you have smitten off the Gorgon’s head, place it in this wallet, and think of me.”

And therewith the nymphs fled laughing to their caves, and the hero girded himself to continue his journey.

The winged sandals upon his feet, the shield of Athene upon his arm, the sword of Hermes in his hand, over his

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

shoulders the wallet of the nymphs, and upon his head the helmet of Hades, the hero speeded upon his way; and in no great while found himself nearing the coasts of Libya. Here, the Graiæ had told him, dwelt their dread sisters, and soon the hero has come nigh their dreadful abode. Amid vast mountains it was, black and cavernous, and the tempestuous roar of inky streams. Stern storms guarded it with eternal tempest and impenetrable night, with lightnings that never slept and thunders that ever rolled, and in the lightning flashes Perseus beheld everywhere by the desolate roadside the forms of men and beasts changed into stone.

Yet, the hero's heart sank not at all, for all the terror of the place, nor the inky dark, nor the lightnings that seemed to cleave the world like an apple, nor for the foul smoke that poured in vast billows around him, nor

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

for the loathsome phantoms that met him on the way, nor for the stone faces frozen stiff with pain, nor for any sound or sight unspeakable. Without a fear he went on, till he came to the heart of the black clamour, and in a vast cave pouring snakes and creatures that have no name, looking in his magic shield, he saw the Gorgons asleep. Two of them, Stheino and Euryale, were monsters. Their heads were covered with serpent's scales. They had great tusks like boars, and brazen hands, and golden wings. But Medusa was otherwise. Her face was that of a dead woman who had died looking on some unutterable terror. She was beautiful still, but with a beauty so awful that it froze the heart—and in her hair the snakes of Athene hissed and writhed eternally, and shot out their black tongues.

Taking the sword of Hermes in his



PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

hand, and looking well into his shield, Perseus smote off the sleeping head. Then arose a tumult like the cave of the winds, but grasping the streaming head by its awful locks, his winged sandals had soon carried him out into the wide Libyan desert. As he flies, the Gorgon's blood drips down into the yellow sand, and, as it falls there, the ground quickens with venomous serpents. For this reason Libya is a land of serpents to this day.

Then the winds carry him hither and thither over the wide world, as a cloud is carried; and, afar off, he beholds the earth beneath him. Among the constellations he soars, and the heavenly signs. In the northern heaven three times he meets the shining Bears; three times he comes where the Crab makes fierce with hot stars the southern heaven. To the West he is carried, and anon to the East.*

cf. Ovid

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

And now the end of the day has come, and, fearful of the oncoming night, he alights in the western limit of the world, the kingdom of Atlas. Rest too the hero seeks, till Lucifer shall once more bring back Aurora to the awakening world. Now king Atlas was of all kings the vastest in the bulk of his body, and very wide and rich was his kingdom. The ends of the earth were his, and those long horizons of the sea into which the great sun sinks at evening. Flocks and herds in thousands and tens of thousands roamed his pastures; and no neighbour broke the peace of his secluded kingdom. The trees in his happy islands were made of gold; leaves of gold, and golden branches, and apples of bright gold under the thick leaves.

To king Atlas came Perseus, and thus addressed him: "Friend, if to be of noble race is aught to you, I, who

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

come to you thus am a son of Zeus. No less illustrious a father is mine. If also you delight to honour glorious deeds, there are deeds of my doing which should earn your wonder. In the name of my divine father, and my own valour, I beg of you hospitality and a resting place.”

But Atlas bethought him of an old oracle of the Parnassian Themis, which ran thus:— “A time will come, Atlas, when thy golden trees shall be stripped of their gold, and a son of Zeus it will be who shall despoil them.”*

In fear of this oracle, Atlas had enclosed his orchard within strong walls, and had let loose a huge dragon whom he called Ladon, to guard it night and day. Likewise, he had driven all strangers from his land.

So, in no wise friendly to Perseus, he thus answered: “Begone hence,

*cf. Ovid

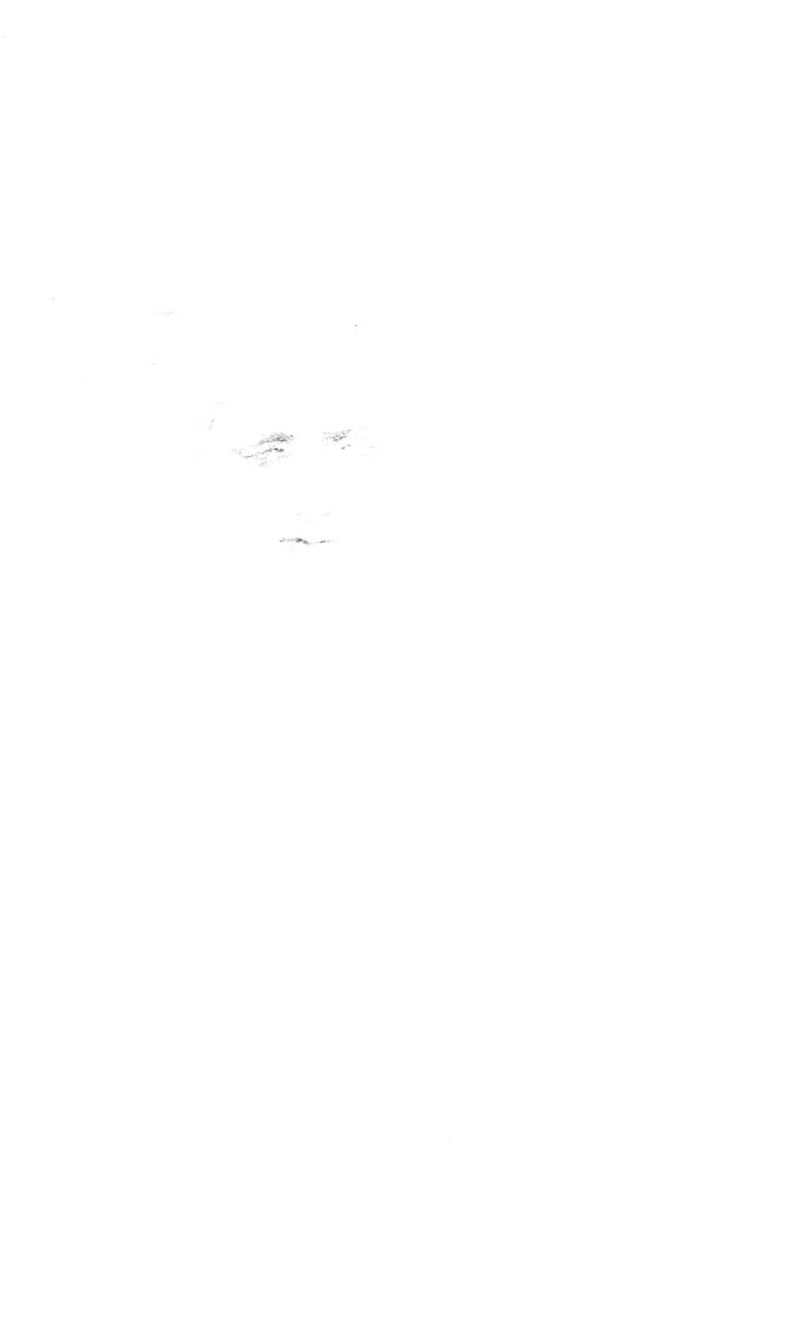
PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

before the exploits of which you falsely boast, or even Zeus himself, shall be too late to save you."

To his words he adds violence, and attempts to thrust the hero from his inhospitable doors. The hero parleys with him awhile, anon by fair words, and anon by threats. But, slight in strength compared with such a giant, and at last losing patience, "Since my friendship is so poor in your esteem," he says, "accept this other gift from me."

Then turning his own face away, he uplifts the head of Medusa before the gaze of the giant. And immediately where Atlas stood is a vast mountain-range. The hair and beard of the king have changed into woods. His shoulders and his hands jut out into ridges. His bones have turned into rocks, and his head is now a mountain peak.

Thus the gods willed it, and thus



PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

upon the mountain that was once Atlas the intolerable weight of heaven, with all its stars, now rests forever.

Having rested well, in defiance of Atlas, Perseus awoke early in a windless dawn—for father Æolus had locked up the winds in their eternal prison. Lucifer, who cruelly remembers mankind of its daily work, was already risen and shining brightly in the high heaven. Fastening his wings upon his ankles, and girding on his sword, the hero is soon speeding along the morning sky. As his winged feet cleave the air, nations without number flicker beneath him and are left behind, until at length he is arrived at Ethiopia, the kingdom of Cepheus.

Now Cepheus, who was the son of Phœnix, had to wife Cassiope, who was then as beautiful upon the earth as she is now forever among the stars. Cassiope as a beautiful woman will, in

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

the joy and pride of her own loveliness, had vaunted herself fairer than the Nereids fairest of all the women of the sea. The Nereids had appealed to Poseidon for vengeance, and to please them, he had sent a horrible sea-monster to revenge the coasts of Cepheus. Much devastation and terror did the monster work, till at length the king, having consulted the oracle of the god Ammon, learned that the wrath of the Nereids could be appeased in no way but one. Andromeda, his beautiful daughter, must be given to the monster.

So it was, that as the hero neared the Ethiopian coast, he was aware of a beautiful maiden bound all naked to a rock on the edge of the sea. But that the light breeze softly raised her soft hair, and that warm human tears were streaming from her beautiful eyes, he might have deemed her a marble image. Much he wonders what the thing may

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

mean, and, as he gazes on her, pondering, his heart takes fire at her beauty. So great an enchantment it casts over him that he almost forgets to wave the wings upon his feet.

Presently alighting upon the rocks, he reverently approaches the maiden, with words that falter with very love of her.

“O maiden,” he said, “deserving of far other chains than these—those chains alone by which love binds two hearts together—tell me what land is this, and what your name, and why you wear these cruel chains.”

But Andromeda could not answer him for very shame, nor dare she lift her eyes to look on him, she a virgin in her pitiful plight of nakedness. She made to hide her face rosy with blushes with her hands, but the chains constrained her, and for a long time her only answer was the gushing of her

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

tears. But at length the gentle importunity of the hero overcame her fears, and she told him that this was Ethiopia, her name Andromeda, and that she was there a victim to the vanity of her mother, the beautiful Cassiope.

Her story, however, was but half told, when there arose a most direful roaring from the sea. The waves began to boil, and presently the head of the monster was seen approaching. Andromeda screams in terror and her unhappy parents close at hand wring their hands in despair. But no help is in them, save lamentation and unavailing tears.

To them Perseus addresses himself:—
“Time enough for tears hereafter—but the time left us for help is short. Tell me, were I to ask your daughter in marriage, I, Perseus, the son of Zeus and of Danæ, begotten in a shower of singing gold; I, Perseus, slayer of the

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

Gorgon Medusa, with her serpent locks ; I, Perseus, who have dared tread with winged feet the fields of the upper air ; should I not, without any other merit, surely be preferred before any other suitor ? But if, too, I should save your daughter from death, will you not surely pledge to me her hand ? ”

The maiden's parents gladly accept the hero's aid, and pledge him not only her hand, but the kingdom also as a dowry.

Meanwhile, the monster was fast approaching the shore, huge as some galley driving its brazen prow through the waves, the straining arms of a hundred youths flashing the swift oars. Its vast bulk shouldered aside the waves and dashed them high in spray, and the sea boiled far and near with its furious passage. Terrible indeed was the monster to behold, foul offspring of the ancient deep. For a thousand years he

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

had lain asleep in his dark lair at the bottom of the sea and all the green slime of the sea was thick and rusty upon him. His ribs were encrusted with hollow shells, and slabby weeds were rooted in the interstices of his scales. His eyes were pits of green light, and his mouth was a yellow cave in which great teeth glittered like jagged swords of stone. His nostrils belched fire and sulphurous smoke, as he screamed and lashed his long sides with his vast fins, and eagerly fluttered his scaly wings, huge as the sails of the largest ship.

At length he is no farther away from the shore than a Balearic slinger could easily whirl his plummet of lead—and now the hero makes no more delay, but, rising high into the air with his swift pinions, threatens the monster from above. His shadow falls upon the sea and the monster roars with fury

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

and clashes his fierce jaws upon the vain image. Then as an eagle, the bird of Zeus, seeing a snake lying in the hot sun, will seize him from behind, and, lest it should turn upon him its venomous jaws, fix his talons in the scaly neck, so Perseus swiftly alighted a moment on the ridged back of the monster and plunged his sword up to the hilt in his mountainous shoulder.

Terrible then was the rage of the monster. The sea instantly crimsoned with his blood, and his roaring could be heard for many miles, as he smote his fish-shaped tail this way and that in pain. Sometimes he would rise high in the air, and sometimes plunge beneath the waves; and again he would turn swiftly about, like a wild boar pursued by the hounds. With nimble wings the hero avoids his savage jaws, and deftly inflicts upon him wound after wound, now plunging his sword

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

into his barnacled sides, now cruelly piercing his ribs, and again wounding his mighty tail. The monster vomits forth streams of blood and his fury redoubles with each new wound the hero gives.

By this the wings of Perseus are so drenched in blood and spray, that they move heavily and he dares no longer trust himself to them. So, espying a rock half-submerged by the sea, he betakes him thither and supporting himself upon that with his left hand, he thrusts his sword many times through the entrails of the monster.

And therewith suddenly the battle was ended, and there went up a great cry of joy from the shore, and from the watching heaven above. Cepheus and Cassiope embrace him with happy tears, and gratefully hail him their son and the preserver of their house; and who shall describe the joy of

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

Andromeda as her chains are stricken from her, and the looks of love which she repays the hero for his toil! Fair cause of his travail, was she not even a fairer reward?

Then mindful of his duty to the gods, Perseus built three altars of turf. The left, he dedicated to Hermes; the right, to Athene, and in the middle an altar to Zeus; and upon each of these he makes fitting sacrifices; to Athene, a milk-white steer; a calf to Hermes; and to the father of the gods a kingly bull.

And now, his deeds accomplished, and his duties done, he turns to Andromeda, his fair prize, and the marriage torches are lighted and the marriage fires heaped with perfumes. O Hymen! O, Hymenee! The houses are hung with garlands, and the town is filled with singing and the sound of lyres and pipes and flageolets from end

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

to end. The palaces of the great nobles are thrown open. The gilded halls are filled with feasting and laughter; and from the street the poorest might gaze where in the great hall of Cepheus, sat the King and the Queen and Andromeda and Perseus, at a high table making merry with all the great of the land about them. Happy night, that sees Andromeda snatched from her doom! Happy hero, to have won such a bride!

But alas! this harmony was destined to a rude and unforeseen interruption, for suddenly there blended with the murmur of pleasure a deeper and very different sound, the sound of an angry multitude approaching, and presently the jocund hall was invaded with a surging threatening crowd, led by one Phineus, brother to the king. Now, before the coming of the monster, Phineus had been betrothed to

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

Andromeda, and, though he himself had made no attempt to save her, he was none the less, nay perhaps the more, envious of the hero who had rescued her from her impending doom. Red with anger, he leads the noisy mob, and shaking his ashen spear at Perseus, threatens him in some such words as these: "Behold in me, Phineus, the betrothed husband of her you have stolen from me. Nor think that your wings, nor your god-like father minted in counterfeit gold will protect you from my just revenge."

Thereat he made as he would hurl his spear, but Cepheus, his kingly brother, cried out in expostulation: "Brother, what would you do? What mad fancy possesses you? Would you repay with so great a crime so noble a service? Is this your thanks to him who has saved the wife you pretend to love? It is not Perseus who has taken

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

Andromeda from you—but the anger of the Nereids, and horned Ammon, and that sea-monster who came to glut himself on the fair fruit of my loins? She was lost to you at that moment when she was chained to the rock. You, her uncle and her betrothed, raised no hand to help her. She was bound under your own eyes, but you made no effort to save her. Will you then grudge her to the man who has done what no one else dared, and given her back to us all? If his reward seems too great to you, why did you not yourself win it, when it stood fastened to the rock? Now surely, it is fairly his, through whom my old age goes not childless, after all. Is it not the reward I promised him, a reward to which his birth and his deeds alike entitled him? Believe me, brother, it has been no choice between him and you, but between him and death.”

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

To all this Phineus paid no heed at all, but glaring from one to the other, he hesitated awhile whether to throw his spear against his brother, or against Perseus. At length he hurls it wide of its destined mark, and Perseus, no longer able to control himself, leaps from his couch, plucks the spear from the cushion in which it is vainly quivering, and hurls it back at his foe. But Phineus saves himself behind an altar. To think of such a coward finding sanctuary!

But alas! the spear meant for him struck the forehead of a better man, and Rhætus grovels in death and spatters the laughing tables with his blood. Then, indeed, there arose an ungovernable tumult, and the whole place is filled with the clash of swords, every man striking this way and that, he hardly knows whom. Loud voices insist that Cepheus shall die with his

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

son-in-law; but Cepheus contrives to escape, protesting on his good faith, and calling the gods of hospitality to witness that this disturbance is none of his making.

For a moment it seems as though the hero must perish in those torrents of angry men, but again the gods are mindful of him, and suddenly in the thick of the fight he is aware of Athene by his side. She casts the protecting shadow of her shield over him, and cheers him with her words. Thus sustained, the hero nerves himself anew, and long the list of those who fell beneath his busy sword.

But, for all his valour, it seems as though the battle will go against the hero, for the following of Phineus are many and strong, and their javelins fly past his eyes and his ears, this side and that, thicker than hail in winter. Perseus stands with his back against a



PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

pillar, and like a famished tiger, when he hears the delicious lowing of two herds in different valleys, knows not which to choose for his meal, and yet is fain to devour both; he hesitates between the streams of men right and left that come against him. Molpius of Chaonia leads the left wing of the attack, and Nabathean Ethemon the right; and, the hesitation of the hero passing, both are soon added to the victims of his industrious sword.

At length, however, weary of the unequal fight, Perseus called out in a loud voice that was heard above the tumult of the battle: "Since you force me to it, I must needs seek aid from an old enemy. If I have a friend left, let him turn away his face:" and thereon he took the head of the Gorgon from his wallet and held it aloft.

"Try your miracles on some one else," mocked Thescelus, poisoning his

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

javelin; but, before it could leave his hand, his hand was stone, and the fool stood there fast, a vain image of threatening marble. Ampyx who stood next him made a spirited pass at Lyncidas, but, midway in the stroke, his arm grew stiff, and he could move it neither one way nor the other. Then Nileus, an arrogant boaster, who lyingly declared the Nile to be his father, flaunted his shield before the hero—the shield on which the seven channels of the Nile were graven in gold and silver. “Look well, Perseus”—he said, “at these emblems of my race, and congratulate yourself that you are to be slain by a man so nobly born.”

But the words were scarce out of his mouth, before the lips that spoke them had turned to stone, and his silly half-opened mouth became his monument.

Yet Eryx was still unconvinced by this magic statuary. “It is your

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

cowardice that turns you to stone," he said to his friends, "not the snaky locks of the Gongon; follow me, and see me strike this stripling to the earth for all his enchanted weapons."

And he was brave enough to have rushed on, but ere he could move, the earth caught him by the soles of his feet, and there he stood in the act of onslaught, a warrior carved in stone.

All these met a well deserved punishment, but alas! there was a friend of the hero who, unwittingly looking upon the terrible face, became its victim too; a valiant soldier, Aconteus by name. Astyages, deeming him still alive, struck him with his sword. The sword rang out as when one strikes a rock, and as Astyages looked on him in wonder, the same change overtook him also, and his amazement was perpetuated in marble.

But it would be tedious to name all

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

who became victims of the Gorgon. Two hundred men were still men when Astyages changed to stone, but in no long time they were stone also; and all the clangour had died down and a strange stillness had come over the hall so lately filled with the noise of battle.

Only one man, save the hero, moved among the cold statues—the coward Phineus. He appeals to his friends in vain—they are stone; he touches them,—they are cold as marble; he calls them by their names,—they cannot answer. Then, turning away his eyes, he stretches out his hands for mercy.

“Perseus, you have conquered,” he cried. “I acknowledge my fault. Yet it was no hatred of you that moved me, or the desire of a kingdom. It was for love of Andromeda I fought. She was yours indeed by merit, but to me she had been promised so long ago. Still I am not sorry to yield. Take

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

away that terrible face, whatever it may be, and give me leave to live. I ask no more. Most valiant of men, spare my life—nothing but that. Let all the rest be yours.”

“All the mercy I can show you, Phineus, shall be yours. Lay aside your fears, poor trembler,—no weapon shall come near you, Phineus. And more than that, I will make a monument for you that shall last forever. In the house of my father-in-law, you shall be a conspicuous ornament, and my wife shall console herself for your loss by looking upon you in marble whenever she has a mind to.”

Then towards the shivering wretch he turned the face of the daughter of Phorcys, and straightway the tears in the coward's eyes were frozen before they could fall, his neck grew stiff, and the whole pitiful figure of the man, his frightened face, his suppliant look, his

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

hands helplessly hanging down, and the cowed guilt of his whole demeanour were suddenly smitten into everlasting stone.

Then was all silence in the hall that so lately had been so full of noise. All was silence, and all—save Perseus—was stone.

Such was the wedding feast of Perseus and his Andromeda.

* * * * *

And now the hero bethinks him of his fair mother and King Polydectes, and, taking with him his wife and his followers in a golden galley, the gift of his father-in-law, he makes all speed for Seriphos. There at length arrived by the grace of favourable winds, he finds Danæ, and her faithful friend, the shepherd Dictys, in the temple of Athene, fugitives from the wrath of the king. Much had Danæ suffered, and many insults, from the base love of

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

Polydectes, all this while that her divine son has been filling earth and sky with his deeds, and at length Polydectes had threatened her very life, if she denied herself to him. Then in despair she had fled to the temple of Athene, and glad was the sound of her boy's feet approaching, and the sound of his brave voice, and sweet indeed his kisses on her brow.

Hardby in the palace King Polydectes drank deep with his courtiers, and the foolish noise of drunken laughter met the hero and his mother, as with Andromeda and Dictys, they left the temple, to meet the king.

Coming to the palace, Perseus struck the door of the great hall with his sword, so that it fell open before him, and there he stood, his face shining like a god's before the gaze of the astonished king.

“You bade me bring you the head

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

of Medusa, O king Polydectes," he said. "I have done your bidding. It is here. Will you not condescend to look upon my gift?"

"I believe as little in your Medusa as in the fairy tale of your birth," scoffed the king, still hard of heart, and untouched by all the hero had done, and all the hardships through which he had passed.

"Judge for yourself, then"—answered Perseus.

Every face was turned to him, as he took the fearful head from his wallet, and, within the space of a single heart-beat, every face was changed to stone.

Turning away from the silent hall, Perseus, in gratitude for all his good will toward his mother, made Dictys king of the island; and then, with Danæ and Andromeda, set sail for Argos.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, in Argos much had



PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

befallen. King Acrisius, now deep sunken in age, grew even more afraid of the oracle as his days shortened, and, still in hope to avoid it, had left his kingdom in the keeping of his brother Proetus, and himself gone to dwell awhile with the king of Larissa. But Proetus had proved a traitor and usurped the kingdom, and Perseus must do battle with him before he may set foot on his native shore. Once more the head of the Medusa serves him, and then in the security of achievements so evidently the work of higher powers, Perseus, with his mother and his wife, thinking no ill but only good, set out for Larissa, deeming that the old king's heart must be softened when he shall hear all the marvellous story, and hear too of his kingdom won back for him by the grandchild he had once given to the sea.

King Teutamis received them

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

hospitably, but the fear of the gods was still heavy upon King Acrisius, so that he turned away his eyes from his daughter Danæ and her divine son, though both were fain to love the old man and comfort him.

Now it chanced that one day King Teutamis decreed games in honour of Perseus, and Perseus contended in the throwing of the quoit with the youth of the land. Very skillfully he hurled the shining disc; once, twice and thrice he threw it; but at the fourth time, the quoit—wafted say some by Zephyrus at the command of the Father of the gods,—flew wide of the mark and lighted upon the foot of King Acrisius.

Now, of the wound thus innocently given, Acrisius died, so the patient doom decreed for the contemner of Dionysus was thus fulfilled. So vain is it for a mortal to fight the purposes of the gods.

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

By the death of Acrisius, Perseus became King of Argos, but he had no heart to possess a kingdom so sadly his. Therefore, he gave over the Kingdom to Megapenthes, the son of Proetus, accepting in exchange the principality of Tiryns, of which he remained lord until his death.

But first he made return of his magic sword to Hermes, and of his wings and his wallet to the nymphs, and of his enchanted helmet to Hades, and the head of Medusa he gave to Athene, who carries the head of her hated rival in her shield to this day.

In Tiryns, Perseus and Andromeda lived in great content for many years, and saw many goodly children grow up around them.

Their most famous son was Perseus, who afterwards founded the great empire that goes by his name, but they had many other sons and daughters

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

besides, the names of all of whom are not recorded. History, however, has preserved the names of these seven:—Alcaeus, Sthenelus, Heleius, Mestor, Electryon, Gorgophone, and Autochthe.

At his death, Perseus was worshipped as a god in many a shrine between Argos and Mycenæ, and in Seriphos there rose for him a stately temple. In Athens there was an altar in his honour, and even in far-off Egypt he was worshipped.

So great had been his life that men could not believe him dead.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.



